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U.S. Government hands over renovated infrastructure in Yungas region

On July 17, U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia Philip S. Goldberg, the Mayor of Coroico, representatives of the national Government, and the residents of the town of Tocaña inaugurated two renovated infrastructure works in the Yungas region of the Department of La Paz. This project is part of the U.S. Government's support for the Government of Bolivia, its National Development Plan, and for Bolivian citizens who are seeking a better quality of life, new economic opportunities, and sustainable development for the Yungas.

While inaugurating the renovated Tocaña cultural center and the town's school, Ambassador Goldberg said that the work done on the cultural center had been coordinated with the community to develop tourism and related services in Tocaña. He added that the renovation of the school was proof of the U.S. Embassy's commitment to support the indigenous people in the area.

"We support integrated alternative development in the Yungas," Goldberg said. "Not only do we want to work on economic initiatives, but also on other areas that promote culture and education. On behalf of the U.S. Government, I thank you for allowing us to become partners in this effort to achieve development while preserving Tocaña's traditions and culture."

Both inauguration ceremonies were also presided over by the Vice Minister of Coca and Integrated Development Gerónimo Meneses, the Mayor of Coroico Manuel Yani Calle, the Mayor of Coripata, Walter Torres Calle, and community representatives of Tocaña.

Tocaña's Cultural Community Center was built in 2003 to promote tourism and foster interest in the community and its culture, especially for *saya*, a dance that originated in this town. Due to its small space and lack of resources, the center failed in attracting national and international tourists. In 2006, community residents requested assistance to remodel and enlarge the center. The U.S. Government, through its Agency for International Development (USAID), provided Bs. 444,000 to develop the new cultural community center, which includes a visitors' center, a museum, and a hostel. The combined project will directly benefit 32 families and indirectly the whole Tocaña community as well as neighboring Coroico.

Additionally, the school in Tocaña was in extremely poor condition. Its walls were on the verge of collapsing, the roofs were leaking, the floor was crumbling, and almost all windows were gone. With USAID's funding, the school, which serves 25 students, now has completely renovated facilities, including new roofs, doors, and windows.

Moreover, within the framework of a bilateral program for Integrated Development, the United States has supported the municipality of Coroico by funding productive road and community infrastructure, including a new bus terminal, a shelter for farmers, and the Mururata bridge. Also, significant social programs have been financed, including healthcare, justice services, and tourism promotion projects. On the economic side, the United States has funded a highly successful program for gourmet coffee production.